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NSC BRIEFING

28 July 1954

UNREST IN FRENCH NORTH AFRICA

- I. Ferment continues in two French protectorates in North Africa, Morocco and Tunisia. While Morocco was until this spring the scene of greater violence, present situation there under new Resident General Francis Lacoste has become one of maneuver and negotiation by moderately nationalistic leaders. In contrast, problems faced by French in Tunisia are worsened by upsurge of terrorism following mass resignation of Tunisian cabinet.
- II. Recent pattern of "terrorism" in Morocco has included successful economic boycotts and destruction of crops. New element this week in open letter to Resident General from some hundred Moroccan notables:
 - A. Urging reinstitution of elementary civil liberties and frank discussion of current problems.
 - B. This letter, together with similar communication from 75 French residents of Morocco, could provide basis for selection of "moderate" negotiators to assist in formulation

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C. In any event French troop strength of 45,000 should be sufficient to maintain status quo.

D. French government withholding action on Morocco until Tunisian problem is settled.

III. Despite strict French security measures and military reinforcements, terrorism continues in Tunisia.

A. After Tunisian cabinet resigned en masse 5 July, Bey appointed interim body headed by Frenchman, thereby triggering flareup of violence.

B. Latest assassination victim (95th fatality since mid-March) was French commandant of Bey's guard (shot in back 24 July).

IV. Terrorism Tunisia stems from three sources:

A. Fellagha (traditional bandits, variously estimated at 1,000 to 10,000). Outlaws, inhabiting desolate interior hill region; exist by raids upon population. Ranks now allegedly swelled by nationalists and military deserters. Big upsurge May 1954 when groups moved northward.

1. Fairly well equipped, probably from abroad--possibly by nationalists or sympathizers in Libya.

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2. Effectiveness as quasi-nationalist force limited by unreliability, lack central direction.

3. Latest intelligence indicates retreat back into hills, under heavy government pressure.

B. Sporadic killing, such as that of commandant, and sabotage.

1. Apparently motivated more by anti-French feeling than by pro-nationalist or Communist sympathies.

2. Difficult to control by military means alone.

C. Counter-terrorism by French settlers.

1. Example: such retaliation as killing by settlers of five natives at Djemmal and El Battan 11 July.

2. Connivance of law enforcement officers makes control difficult.

V. Prospects in Tunisia:

A. In short term, present French control measures should reduce frequency of sporadic attacks.

1. Include imposition strict curfews, body search, military trials for illegal possession of arms, etc.

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2. Arrival troops from French West Africa, Algeria, Morocco, France, in past month has raised forces in Tunisia from estimated 16,000 to 26,000.

B. In long term, however, restoration order dependent upon definition French policy by Paris.

1. No specific policy yet; government action expected 31 July, to be based following points:

- a. French ministry considers Tunisians able to administer internal affairs.
- b. France to retain control over foreign affairs, defense, finance.
- c. Rights and status of French in Tunisia have to be assured.

C. Although nationalist opinion has hardened since 1952, leaders would consider this an appropriate settlement.

- 1. Demand real gains, genuine self-government.
- 2. However, lack disciplined following of 1952; may not be able to control all anti-French factions.

D. Settler opposition also hardened; would oppose all concessions

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to nationalists.

1. Strong pressures on French government and National Assembly to be expected.
2. Settlers likely to resort to direct action against leading nationalists.
3. Emergence of small organized moderate settler group, however, one new and hopeful factor.

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